

Marzik, Kaity

From: Sarah McIntee <sarahrmcintee@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 10:54 AM
To: LABTestimony
Subject: Fwd: House Bill 5276, Concern for the Federal Au Pair Program

Good afternoon,

My name is Sarah McIntee, and I live at 6 Susan Court in Norwalk, CT. Unfortunately, due to scheduling conflicts I am unable to appear tomorrow and provide in person testimony, so I am opting to send you a written statement of testimony via email. I am testifying today in support of the au pair program and to ask that this legislation not be approved as currently drafted because it will adversely impact the au pair program in the State of CT.

My family has had the pleasure of taking part in the au pair program for the past 4 years. We have hosted three amazing au pairs, two from Brazil and one from Mexico. While they do provide childcare, they are primarily here as part of a cultural exchange program, and when their year (or two should they decide to extend their J-1 visa) is over they go home and use the experience and skills learned here in the United States to further their careers. For example, one of our au pairs goals of the program was to further her English language skills so that she could get a better job in the business world in her home country. She felt that those jobs were incredibly hard to come by and that by coming to the U.S., mastering English, and immersing herself in our country, she would improve her odds of landing her "dream job". Another one of our au pairs had trained at home to be an English teacher. Coming here was an opportunity to take those skills she had been working on and master them. She also was a huge fan of American culture and wanted the opportunity to immerse herself in it and learn more about it. All three of my au pairs have had the opportunity to travel throughout the United States and internationally during their time with us.

As a host family, we are very carefully regulated by the Department of State and the program outlines expectations in great detail for both sides. We provide room, board, money towards educational courses, a car, car insurance so that they can drive that car whenever they want, a gym membership at our local YMCA and so much more. We treat them as full fledged members of our family who join us when we go out to eat, when we attend family events, and for every holiday or major life event. They literally become like family to us.

We take part in this program though because of the benefits it offers both our au pairs and our family. We have developed very close bonds with our au pairs over the years. Our girls have have been exposed to another culture and language from a young age. In fact, my 15 month old currently only uses the word "Si" to respond in the affirmative, instead of saying "Yes". My girls are exposed to another culture, another language, and regularly day dream about the chance to visit our prior au pairs that have already completed their time with us. Having au pairs has opened up their world in a way that nothing else could. It has broadened their world and given them a gift that my husband and I are proud of. Our au pairs have also loved the experience. They have traveled, made new friends, improved their English and learned life skills that they otherwise would have never gotten in their home countries.

The concern I am contacting you about is that current draft of HB-5276 and the definition of a "domestic worker" includes au pairs. If this definition stands, it will result in Connecticut passing a law that is in direct conflict with many of the Federal Regulations that govern the program. This contradiction would result in the program becoming complicated, potentially overly burdensome and costly with contradictory and competing regulatory guidelines, and host families leaving the program. One of our neighboring states, New York, has recently encountered this very issue and they have elected to do exactly what I am asking you to, they have exempted au pairs from the definition of a "domestic worker" look to the New York Domestic Worker legislation. A fact sheet evidencing that NY State exempts au pairs from their Domestic Worker legislation can be found using this link:

<https://labor.ny.gov/legal/laws/pdf/domestic-workers/facts-for-employers.pdf>

For this reason, I ask that you draft an exemption for au pairs to the definition of a domestic worker. Specifically, I'd like to request the following:

"Exclude any individual participating in an au pair program subject to regulations under the United States Department of State's Exchange Visitor Program, 22 C.F.R. 62.31"

Please don't vote to pass this bill as drafted. Please add an exemption to the language to ensure that the au pair program remains an option for au pairs and host families in the state of Connecticut.

Thank you,

Sarah McIntee
6 Susan Court
Norwalk , CT 06851
(703) 801-0225